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BEHEMOTH

- Loch Ness: A videotape taken on September 5, 1998, is said to contain 10 seconds of Nessie's hump or head "moving very slowly through the water, then submerging quickly", reports Fortean Times 116, p. 7. The tape was shot by Craig Mitcheson from board of the boat "Nessie Hunter". Although Mitcheson is convinced he has filmed a monster, skeptics see a seal. Fortean Times has promised a fuller report in their next issue.

- Bibliography: * The widely reported expedition to Sweden's monster lakes has met an unfriendly end, with accusations and counter accusations. More details in Fortean Times 116, p. 61. * The mysterious alligator in a gravel pit at Massa Maritima, Italy (Rheinpfalz 13 August 1998; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 25 August 1998, p. 12)

KRAKEN

- An interesting article on octopus behavior was in the "International Herald Tribune", 17 August 1998, p. 9. Roland Anderson, a biologist at Seattle Aquarium, says: "(They are) the most intelligent invertebrate in the world". * For a "cyclopean octopoid of presumably extradimensional origin" in Malaysia in 1969, see Fortean Times 116, p. 51. How does one know that something is of extradimensional origin? * In 1969, a US marine saw a giant squid more than 100ft long off Vieques Island, Puerto Rico, according to a "Cryptozoology Review" (vol. 3, no. 1) article by Richard Ellis. (Fortean Times 116, p. 58)

USO

- Norway: Jan Pettersen, a fisherman, has had 40 packs of cigarettes and a lighter put into waterproof bags on the rescue boat of his ship. 54-year old Pettersen explained: "Several years ago, a submarine towed my trawler to the ocean's floor, and I had to escape quickly and had to leave my cigarettes on the trawler. When I was sitting in the escape boat, I read the instructions: 'Smoke a cigarette and relax'. I was even more angry after that!" (Süddeutsche Zeitung 26 September 1998, p. 12)

- Bibliography: * The famous Lago di Cote UFO-photo (Lago di Cote is also a lake with USO reports) was tentatively identified as a drop of developer by the CENAP Report 7/98, p. 17 * An anonymous photographer snapped several pictures of a UFO over New York after he had seen it emerge from East River on April 12, 1993. In fact, the pictures were hoaxes, done to test the gullibility of UFO-researchers. Of course, the photos were accepted as genuine, as Antonio Huneus reports in CENAP Report 7/98, p. 18. * Between 1955 and 1956, the British Navy started spy balloons from Evanton near Inverness which were mistaken for UFOs by residents. (CENAP Report 7/98, p. 25) I have checked my files on Loch Ness forteana and found there had been UFO reports from Inverness in 1953 and 1957, but none in the years indicated.

MARINE LIFE

- Senigalli, Italy: "Jaws" came alive (at least in their minds) for a hobby angler and his son off the Adriatic coast of Italy on August 27, 1998. The man documented on video tape how a 6-metre white shark "mutilated a fish caught by the angler" and then started to circle the 10-metre boat. "My son panicked, so we returned", said Stefano Catalani. That's hardly danger, yet my newspaper reported the incident which happened 15 miles off the coast as a "shark attack", and four coast guard patrol ships controlled the sea between Ancona and Senigallia, while the beaches were closed for bathers. For all I know, the Mediterranean has no great whites, but it houses basking sharks, and that may well have been the harmless truth behind yet another hysterical shark story. (Sonntag Aktuell, 30 August 1998, p. 48)

● Whales: * Back from extinction, the right whale population of southern Argentina (International Herald Tribune 1 September 1998, p. 2) * About 120 pilot whales stranded at the coast of Tasmania south of Melbourne (if that isn't a misprint) at the end of October. Helpers tried to tow the animals back into deep water, but as usual, they returned to their doom. 30 were dead already a few days later. (Süddeutsche Zeitung 20 October 1998, p. 12)

THE KANGAROOS OF GERMANY

● This was the summer of the kangaroo in Germany. This story is continued from last Bilk. After kangaroo sightings had spread all over Germany, the "Pyrmonter Nachrichten" reported that a motorist had seen Manni beside the A33 motorway, feeding on grass, at the Paderborn exit, some 80 km from Bad Pyrmont, where Manni had escaped from a private Zoo. (taz 21 August 1998, p. 20) At about the same time, the 2ft Bennet-kangaroo was also spotted at a Bad Pyrmont car wash, and a newspaper delivery man saw it at 6 in the morning at Aerzen, about half-way between Bad Pyrmont and the motorway sighting. One report on August 18, 1998, came from Stade near Hamburg. (Bild 21 August 1998, p. 3) A woman came forward to say she had seen Manni on August 15, 1998, at the A 2 motorway near Porta Westfalica in the company of a flock (or whatever the word is) of roe. "Well, all this is confusing", admitted Brigitte Schröter, the kangaroo's keeper. (taz 22 August 1998, p. 24) Then Manni was again seen close to Bad Pyrmont where he came from. A young man had seen the animal on a nearby mountain. "Manni was sitting on the road when a fox went towards him. Both animals then made it into the forest." (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 25 August 1998, p. 12) Now, across Germany to its easternmost province, Saxony. A cab driver from Chemnitz saw him because she recognized "his long tail". Policemen arrived and were able to observe the creature through binoculars. At the same day, but hours earlier (29? August 1998) the kangaroo was also spotted near Bad Pyrmont. (taz 31 August 1998, p. 20) Now to Erkelenz, which is close to the Dutch border near Cologne, and again somewhere completely different! On August 30, 1998, police and firefighters were hunting a kangaroo for the whole day. In the morning, the animal was seen by policemen hiding in a cornfield, so it was cornered in the evening and one huntsman was sure he had hit it three times with shots from a tranquilizer gun. A police spokesman for Heinsberg regretted at a press conference that the kangaroo had escaped, as "the darts had probably failed". (taz 1 September 1998, p. 20) In September, a psychologist explained that Manni sightings were due to extensive press coverage, and my paperw decided to report no more. At the same time, the Erkelenz kangaroo was still hiding in a cornfield at Kuckum, and attempts to chase it out with an ultra light plane had failed. (taz 2 September 1998, p. 20) Meanwhile, it was reported that a kangaroo had also been spotted in Norway at the end of August 1998. It was presumed the animal had crossed over the border from Sweden, as no Norwegian zoo missed any. (internet source: www.vg.no; reported in taz 4 September 1998, p. 14) The news magazine "Spiegel" summed up the affair on 7 September 1998, p. 268, implying in its cynical ways that it had been more or less mass hysteria (which was also my conclusion). The Spiegel added several sightings I hadn't heard of before, namely one near Bad Wiessee in Bavaria and one on September 3, 1998, at Bad Pyrmont. But then events proved me wrong. On September 8, the Erkelenz kangaroo was caught with a shot from a tranquilizer gun and then sadly died of exhaustion in the arm of an animal keeper. So this one had been real. On the same day, Manni was seen at 10 pm at the Maschsee near Hanover, again too far from Bad Pyrmont and also too late on the day for an average kangaroo. (Bild 9 September 1998, p. 3) On September 17, 1998, workers found the body of Manni close to the railway station of Bad Pyrmont. It had probably been lying there dead for a couple of days after a train must have wounded it terminally. (Bild 18 September 1998, p. 5) The last kangaroo

sighting for the time was on October 21, 1998, when a newspaper delivery man at Finsterwalde found one sitting in front of a supermarket door. It was obviously frightened and had actually just escaped from a zoo, to which it was easily returned. (taz, 22 October 1998, p. 24) That results in a total of at least seven kangaroos in Germany, three definitely real (because two were killed, one caught), with four others doubtful (only sightings), and others around in Europe (see also last Bilk). I have always wondered why only ABCs, bears and kangaroos are reported as OOPs, not, for example elephants, but the answer seems to be easy: you can mistake cats, foxes, dogs and roe for bears, 'roos or cats, and these are the creatures that the hiker and casual witness is most likely to encounter in the forest. On the other hand, this summer brought also reports (and captures) in Germany of: snapper turtles, crocodiles, penguins and more. An ostrich escaped from a farm at Alzenau in Franconia and was shot by its owner/or a trigger happy hunter (according to Bild) after four days (BILD 19 Aug 1998, p. 3; taz 19 Aug 1998, p. 20), while a boar was spotted and hunted in Rome. (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 25 August 1998, p. 12)

ONZA

- Correction to last Bilk. The Spanish word onza does not signify puma, but panther (although panther is often used as a synonym for puma). Zoologically speaking, the onza (Spanish) or Portuguese onca ist a (melanistic) jaguar, scientifically: *Panthera onca*. In Mexico and Brasil onza/onca is often used synonymous with black puma. Marcel Homet, the explorer in search of lost ruins in Brasil, in his 1950s books often refers to the onca, which, he says, is the Portuguese word for panther.

- Thuringia: Valerie Wagner, 39, a hobby hunter, had a surprise encounter near Gotha in Thuringia, Germany: "(At 19:15 pm) I was collecting mushrooms when this large cat stood in a distance of only 20 metres. It hissed at me. The animal was jet black, more than a metre in length, 50 cm tall and it had a long tail. I stood eye to eye with this panther. Ducking, he slowly crawled toward me. Suddenly he jumped and ran away into the undergrowth. I saw a black panther." The forestry commission checked zoos and a circus in the vicinity, but no panther was missing. "Maybe it was a privately owned pet, released because the cost of keeping it was too high for the owner", mused the commission's Jürgen Neubert. "We are taking this very seriously indeed." (Bild 5 October 1998, p. 3)

YETIS

- Switzerland: Stefan Gemmet owns a hotel at the Grimsel (a favorite haunt of the tazelwurm) and leads an initiative against mountain summit cairns in Switzerland. He not only claims these cairns (each climber adds their own stone to it) spoil the landscape, his wife once came across one in darkness and "thought the yeti was after her". (Süddeutsche Zeitung 9 Sept 1998, p. 12)

- Messner: After a massive advertisement campaign, Reinhold Messner's book on the yeti was finally published in October 1998. It includes many good photos of stuffed yeti specimens and concludes that the yetis is nothing but a myth based on sightings of the Tibetan brown bear. The reaction to this simple solution, which I have read elsewhere and which is not actually Messner's discovery, was mixed, some reviewers were annoyed that Messner could not produce an ape man, but he is certainly right: most yeti sightings refer to bears. Among the articles on Messner I would recommend are the following (ph means they had his yeti photos): Bunte 24 September 1998, p. 40-55 (ph); Spiegel 21 September 1998, p. 202 (ph); Focus 26 September 1998, p. 212-219 (ph); Die Neuen Bücher 2/98, p. 22; Börsenblatt 4 August 1998; Die Rheinpfalz 18 August 1998 and 25 September 1998; the Süddeutsche Zeitung 24 September 1998, p. 3, accused Messner of misleading the public because he had announced for five years that he had proof that the yeti did indeed exist - and now

presented only photos of cute cuddly bears. The book is: Reinhold Messner: Yeti - Legende und Wirklichkeit, 256 pp., 64 colour plates, S. Fisher, 39,80 DM.

CRYPTOZOOLOGY/NEW DISCOVERIES

- Obi near Ceram: Biologists from Bonn have discovered a new species of monitor lizard in a Düsseldorf pet shop. Professional animal hunters had caught the four monitor lizards on Obi in Indonesia. Wolfgang Böhme of the Zoological Institution named the lizards after their yellow colour *Varanus melinus*. (dpa in Rheinpfalz 21 February 1998) Now I had thought that importing exotic animals was a criminal offence and it is a sad thought that many rare species are brought by criminal idiots from their natural habitat to pet shops in Europe where they are sold to individuals trying to enhance their prestige by keeping rare creatures.

- o Books: I once remarked in one of my books that both ufology and ancient astronaut-theory were imperialist systems, integrating wilfully all other species of fortiana. Now they are after cryptozoology. M Baigent, in his "Rätsel der Sphinx", manages to take the gullible research by Heuvelmans, LeBlond and the ISC as proof that the conventional concept of evolution is wrong (you see, there was once this fantastic prehistoric culture, etc.); while a guy called Hans-Joachim Zillmer wrote a horribly stupid book, "Darwins Irrtum" (Herbig 1998) in which he takes the long ago conventionally explained Paluxy tracks as well as the 1977 New Zealand carcass "of a plesiosaur" (actually a basking shark) as evidence that man and dinosaur co-exist, hence Darwin is wrong, hence there is no evolution and no god, but extraterrestrials created us, the dinos and all the rest a few thousand years ago. Of course, fans of Däniken kneel in front of Zillmer, see, for example, OMICRON 4/98, p. 9. I am not open minded here, I am so utterly fed up with people who don't research and then say "I proved this, I proved that". They do not even know the basic facts and are satisfied with copying a tabloid report about the 1977 carcass and do no further research because what they have found simply suits their needs. 99% of ufology is like that, and 100% of "ancient high-tech cultures/ancient astronauts".

GODZILLA

Of course cineasts know that Roland Emmerich is so utterly unable to make a good movie as it can get, and he usually produces crap that doesn't even have the fascination of trash culture, at least since "Star Gate" and the unbearably awful "Independence Day". I've seen a couple of reviews of "size does matter"- "Godzilla" and they are all hysterically anxious to warn the reader not to see a boring, stupid and uninteresting film (for example, taz 10 Sept 1998, p. 15; Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 10 September 1998, p. 43 and all major cineastic magazines). For once, the papers tell us the truth: don't waste time, money and patience to see how imitating Spielberg in every scene can result in a disaster that is both dull and illogical. Plot does matter.

DINOSAURS

- New evidence for a close relationship between dinosaurs and birds have been excavated in Madagascar. Two 70-million-year-old, raven-sized fossils found there combine both dino and bird features. Scientist now assume that bird evolution was multi-branched and very complex (does that mean that not all birds have the same dinosaur ancestor?). Also, in the Gobi desert a turkey-sized bird "Shuvuuia deserti" has been discovered which is more like modern birds than *Archaeopteryx* (but presumably older). My source is the "Süddeutsche Zeitung 19 March 1998, quoting Nature vol. 392, p. 275. I have often wondered if dinos did not also behave like birds, for example *Tyrannosaurus rex* moving his head in the same abrupt way as the average budgie. It's a nice idea.